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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

electric light is made to fit in with the design of the mantel-piece is similarly pleasing and complete. We think, the illustrations here presented, for which we are indebted to *Furniture and Decoration*, of London, prove that the British decorators are as advanced in their idea of interior fitments as those of any other country.

### FRENCH FURNITURE.

BY JAMES CARRUTHERS.



DISTINCTIVE national style in furniture assures the display of character and originality in decorative features; without it labor will be wasted in transient whims and puerile fashions, unless, indeed, as in this country, manufacturers adopt accepted styles or blend the elements of various styles, so modifying and adapting these as to meet special requirements and the tendencies of public taste, thus securing original treatment with

marked distinguishing characteristics. It was the glory of France in the epoch, extending from Francis I. to Louis XVI., to possess recognized national styles, that of the first reign embodying offshoots of the Italian Renaissance. The higher ideal aimed at resulted in a progressive development of styles of furniture that constitute an exhaustless repertoire of suggestiveness, both as to structural form, contour and decoration. Some years since, with the extensive adoption of the Renaissance style of architecture, furniture with us may be said to have assumed certain eclectic characteristics, but later, in following the line of development, French styles, and particularly that of Louis XVI., have come to the front.

The successive styles in the above periods possessed certain features in common, as in stately elegance of contour, resulting from pleasing proportion and skilful balance of ornament, which

With inlays, which had for their purpose the beautifying of surface, curvilinear lines and receding planes became necessary for their display. Metallic styles of ornament favored the abandonment of flat panels for wavy surfaces. Again, the partial adoption of grotesques had its influence in giving capriciousness to other details of form so that they might not look incongruous. The introduction of tapestry designs, as in fauteuils, required delicate encirclings of carved work. We find in all the styles

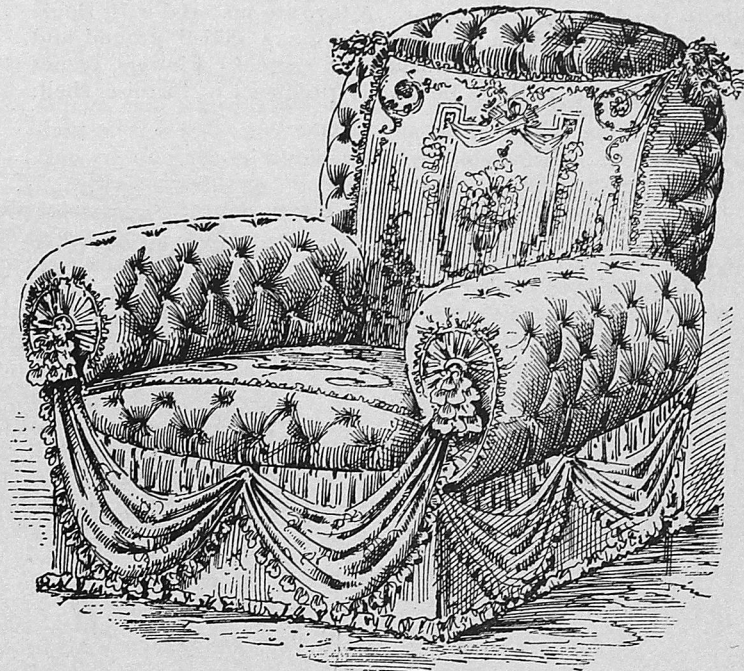


FIG. 6.

straight fluted supports to tables and chairs, as well as curvilinear, at the same time some have less of repose and aim more at emotional effects than others. The rococo style of furniture had to accord with the grandiose decoration of walls and ceilings. Despite the severity of the criticisms aimed at this style, it produced scenic effects attainable by no other means.

It was mainly the different forms of ornament, their character and modes of application, that were the chief factors influencing the formation of the different styles—styles involving change of



FIG. 5.

latter seldom overpowered construction, in elaborate carving, inlays and incrustations. Representative examples are remarkable for the display of technical power, mastery of color in the materials employed and the observance of that perspective which harmonizes masses of ornament, whether in the round or in relief, disclosing more fully the form from whatever point the decorated objects are viewed. In all those styles, too, whilst massive carving was frequently introduced the greater number of articles of furniture designed for private dwellings, have this carving merely like a tendril clambering about the edges, leaving flat panels in the interspaces, these panels having a pleasing irregularity due to the free convolutions of the carved setting, and adorned with inlays on panels. Over ornaments and pendant ornaments usually fashioned with lightsome grace constantly recur.

contour as well. In common with the styles that precede it, Louis XVI. furniture designs introduce fantasies and grotesques in metal and carving, and at times there appear vignettes on porcelain, dancing groups and single figures, such as Hebes and cupbearers. The beauty of the antique was the classification of design and purity of the ornament, but in these enrichments classic taste was revived; at the same time every variety of design was welcomed that fancy could suggest, so that whilst attractive in itself it aided the general effect.

The wide play of ornament afforded by inlays are observable throughout the above periods. Boule, the greatest of ornamentists in cabinet work, brought to bear upon these all the subtleties of his art. Inlaying of furniture in rich woods, ivory, mother of pearl and metals was by no means new, having been practiced



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for ages in Persia and India, but the application gained its novelty, not only from additional materials, but different combinations, different processes and different design. as applied to a wholly different and distinctive national style of furniture. Spain, in the Fifteenth century adorned furniture with inlays of silver. The Italian Renaissance artists, besides enriching furniture with painting and gilding, formed inlay compositions of various stones, together with ivory and pearl. In France, in the reign of Louis XIII., as well as that of Francis I., elegant decorations were made in pearl, ivory and copper. A favorite material with Boule was tortoise shell, which he would set on a gilded ground and inlay with chased brass burnished or enamel. Flowers, scenes and scrolls would at times be wholly produced in tortoise shell;

In applying tortoise shell he first made several cuttings for each piece; then glued several pieces together so that a number of figures and matrixes were produced at one operation. He placed gold-leaf and other metals under the tortoise shell to produce required effects; presently he came to insert the tortoise shell in chased brass fastened by pins or nails, these latter being made to form part of the ornament so as to be completely disguised. He also adopted brass feet and brackets, and encrusted metal edgings to protect the inner ornament. Paris was formerly, as now, the center of manufacture of French artistic furniture, technical training being provided alike for designers and artisans. Many of these artisans may be regarded as possessing traditional skill, the same branch of art having been followed in their fam-

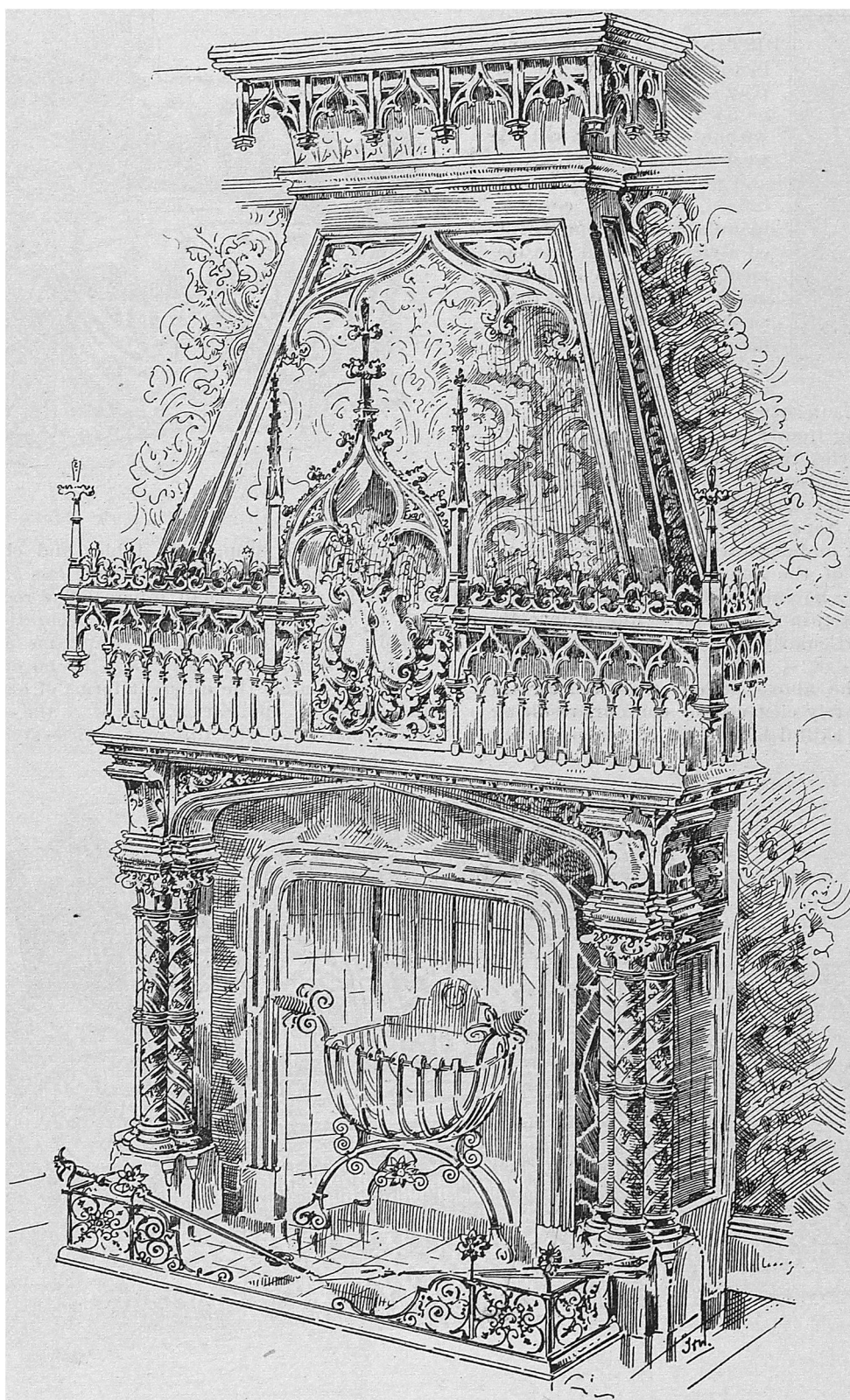


FIG. 7.

mother of pearl, ivory and gold entered into his compositions; stones, such as lapis, lazuli, agate, carnelian and ceramic plaques with vignettes were employed when suitable to his purpose, and the most precious woods of Brazil and the far East. Historic tableaux, including battles, landscapes, hunts, sylvan glades and festive scenes, all came within his scope. Instead of chasing sheets of brass separately, he glued a series of sheets together and thus multiplied by the same strokes, figures and matrices. He also adopted in relief, and in the round, raised brass feet and claws and edgings, and other ornaments of appropriate design, partly to protect the casings and edgings of his work and partly for decoration. The work was necessarily costly, being made for royal residences and foreign princes.

ilies for centuries. The success achieved is largely due to their ability to enter into the spirit of the designs provided and to adopt the means that will render these most effective.

A NEW mode of ornamenting glass has been invented by M. Lacroix, of Paris, which will afford the lady amateurs a pleasant pastime. Hitherto certain colors have required different lengths of firing from others. By this invention colors are so compounded that all are fixed in one firing. But this is not all. Pencils of these like lumbago, are compounded for drawing the designs, the glass being previously slightly dulled, which dulling improves the color effect.